

DAILY BULLETIN

JULY 30, 2004

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BUSH AUTHORIZES ADDITIONAL \$20 MILLION TO ASSIST PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Aid in response to emergency appeal for \$193 million

In response to an emergency appeal by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), President Bush has authorized an additional \$20 million contribution to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza.

According to a July 29 statement by Adam Ereli, State Department deputy spokesman, the funds will be used to provide food, shelter, health care and other urgent humanitarian needs. This donation brings the total U.S. contribution to UNRWA's emergency appeal to \$40 million in 2004.

"The United States is the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA. We continue to encourage other donors to respond urgently to this emergency appeal," said the statement.

Following is the text of Ereli's statement:

STATEMENT BY ADAM ERELI, DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

July 29, 2004

United States Support for Palestinian Refugees

President George W. Bush has authorized the Department of State to use up to \$20 million from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund

to assist Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This contribution is in response to the agency's \$193 million 2004 emergency appeal to fund food, shelter, health, and other urgent humanitarian needs of the over 1.5 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. This brings our total contribution to the emergency appeal to \$40 million in 2004. The United States is the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA. We continue to encourage other donors to respond urgently to this emergency appeal.

POWELL PRAISES SAUDI FIGHT AGAINST TERROR

Secretary thanks Saudis for continued support of U.S. efforts

Secretary of State Colin Powell congratulated Saudi Arabia on its recent successes in combating terrorism and thanked the Saudi leaders for their support of U.S. efforts around the world during his July 28 visit to the kingdom.

"A little over a year ago when I was here just after the terrible attack in the contractor area, I recall how committed the Saudis were at that time to go after terrorists," Powell said during a joint press conference with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal. Noting that 18 of the 19 suspected participants in that attack have since been caught or killed, Powell said, "I congratulate the government for their commitment to fight terrorism."

When questioned by reporters about the Bush administration's attitude with regard to political reform in the kingdom, the secretary said, "There is no question ... that the Saudi leadership understands that reform is appropriate, and the Saudi people are looking to their leaders for reform and the reform is under way. And it would have to be at the pace that is satisfactory to the Saudi leadership and the people of Saudi Arabia."

Secretary Powell also defended the United States' achievements in Iraq, saying, "As a result of the efforts of the United States, and the Coalition, a terrible dictatorship has been removed and the Iraqi people have the opportunity to build a democracy based on the rule of law,

with the rights of all citizens protected, with the military under civilian control, with an independent judiciary."

Powell rejected the suggestion of one reporter that the United States prejudices Arabs and Muslims as terrorists.

"Neither the President, nor I, nor any of my colleagues in the Administration, or for that matter I think I could speak for the American people, see Arabs and Muslims in the image of terrorists," he said. "In fact, many of the people who are being killed now here, in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq, are Muslims."

Powell also reaffirmed the Bush administration's commitment to work towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "This President's vision remains the same. It's a vision that is shared by the Crown Prince, and, frankly, to some extent it was inspired by the Crown Prince. And that is for a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace with Israel," he said.

Powell said the administration is working with the Israelis on their plan to remove all settlements from Gaza and four from the West Bank. He also expressed his hope that recent agreements within the Palestinian leadership "will empower the Prime Minister in a way that will allow him to work with Egyptians, and others to put in place a security force that can protect Gaza when the Israeli withdrawal takes place."

Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal said preliminary discussions took place about the possibility of deploying Arab troops in Iraq. The foreign minister said the Saudi government is engaged in a reform process with complete transparency and complete involvement of the Saudi people in order to generate a consensus. He noted that the consultative council has been given more authority, and municipal council elections are scheduled to take place in the fall.

Powell said the United States and other countries among the G8 industrial democracies are ready to support the reforms in the Middle East.

POWELL LAUDS INITIAL PERFORMANCE OF IRAQI GOVERNMENT

Secretary welcomes Saudi initiative to create Muslim security force

Secretary of State Colin Powell praised the courage and dedication demonstrated by Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and his government since they assumed sovereign control over Iraq.

During a July 29 press conference with the Prime Minister Allawi in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Powell also welcomed the Saudi proposal to form an all-Muslim force to contribute to security efforts in Iraq.

According to Powell, the conditions are now appropriate for Muslim countries to step forward and participate.

“Many of them said they needed to see a U.N. mandate. There is now a U.N. mandate under 1546. They also said they wished to see a sovereign government -- there is now a sovereign government that is up and running. And so, those basic conditions have been met,” he said.

The secretary said the nature of the Muslim countries’ involvement remains to be determined, but he suggested that the forces might be engaged in protecting important facilities or ensuring security for U.N. workers

MODIFIED FOODS SHOULD BE JUDGED CASE-BY-CASE, SCIENTISTS SAY

Food composition more important than breeding technique, says report

Foods that have been significantly modified by genetic engineering or any other method should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis before being made available commercially, according to a new report commissioned by the three U.S. government bodies that regulate agricultural biotechnology.

“Any breeding technique that alters a plant or animal - - whether by genetic engineering or other methods -- has the potential to create unintended changes in the quality or amounts of food components that could harm health,”

said Bettie Sue Masters, who led the group of experts who wrote the report.

The report was released July 27 by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, which advise the U.S. government on science, engineering and medicine. The report was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The scientists were asked to examine the potential health effects of genetically modified foods compared to foods altered by other methods. The group also studied differences between foods derived from cloned and non-cloned animals, according to a National Academies press release.

Genetic engineering “is not an inherently hazardous process” and food safety assessments “based solely on the method of breeding are ‘scientifically unjustified,’” the report concluded.

The report is “enabling, not prescriptive,” providing a “framework” for a science-based assessment system, said Masters at a public forum.

In some cases, she said, evaluation should continue after a product is on the market, especially if it contains a new substance or an unusual nutrient profile.

Copies of Safety of Genetically Engineered Foods: Approaches to Assessing Unintended Health Effects are available from the National Academies Press at: <http://www.nap.edu>

The National Academies

July 27, 2004

Composition of Altered Food Products, Not Method Used to Create Them, Should Be Basis for Federal Safety Assessment

WASHINGTON -- Federal agencies should assess the safety of genetically altered foods -- whether produced by genetic engineering or by other techniques, such as conventional breeding for desirable traits -- on a case-by-case basis to determine whether unintended changes in their composition could adversely affect human health, says a new report from the National Academies’ National

Research Council and Institute of Medicine. The scope of each safety evaluation should not be based solely on the technique used to alter the food, said the committee that wrote the report, because even traditional methods such as cross-breeding can cause unexpected changes. Instead, greater scrutiny should be given to foods containing new compounds or unusual amounts of naturally occurring substances, regardless of the method used to create them.

“All evidence to date indicates that any breeding technique that alters a plant or animal -- whether by genetic engineering or other methods -- has the potential to create unintended changes in the quality or amounts of food components that could harm health,” said committee chair Bettie Sue Masters, Robert A. Welch Foundation Distinguished Professor in Chemistry, University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio. “The possible impact of such compositional changes should be examined on a case-by-case basis to determine whether and how much further evaluation is needed.”

The report uses the term “genetic modification” to describe the broad array of breeding techniques -- ranging from traditional cross-breeding to genetic engineering to the use of chemicals or radiation -- used to alter plant and animal traits that can be inherited from one generation to the next. “Genetic engineering” refers to a specific type of alteration that uses molecular biology techniques to delete genes or to transfer genes for particular qualities from one species to another. For example, plant breeders have engineered crops to resist pests by inserting a protein from a soil bacterium, and efforts are under way to develop foods with enhanced nutritional content.

Adverse health effects from genetic engineering have not been documented in the human population, but the technique is new and concerns about its safety remain. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency commissioned the National Academies to assess the potential for adverse health effects from genetically engineered foods compared with foods altered in other ways, and to provide guidance on how to identify and evaluate the likelihood of those effects.

Genetic engineering is not an inherently hazardous process, the report says, but the resulting food, along with foods created from other methods of genetic modification, should be examined to determine if the inserted genes produce toxins or allergens. Unexpected changes

are more apt to occur if genetic material is transferred between distantly related species. Genetic engineering is more likely to cause unintended changes than some techniques, such as simple selection, but less likely to do so than other currently used methods, such as those that use radiation or chemicals. Because all methods can cause these changes, the committee concluded that attempts to assess food safety based solely on the method of breeding are “scientifically unjustified.”

Instead, foods modified by any method that changes genetic composition should, when warranted by their individual characteristics, be evaluated on a case-by-case basis before their commercial release. The report offers a framework to guide federal agencies in selecting the route of safety assessment. A new genetically modified food whose composition is very similar to a commonly used conventional version may warrant little or no additional safety evaluation. But if an unknown substance has been detected in a food, a more detailed analysis should be conducted to determine whether an allergen or toxin may be present. Likewise, foods with nutrient levels that fall outside the normal range should be assessed for their potential impact on consumers’ diets and health.

Scientists’ current ability to predict whether such changes will cause adverse health effects is limited, and more research is needed in this area, the committee cautioned. In some cases, evaluation should continue after products are on the market -- especially for foods with new substances or unusual nutrient profiles -- to assess and validate how well pre-market evaluations are working. Barriers to this type of surveillance exist, however. For example, currently there is no way to track altered foods in the marketplace or identify consumers who have used them. The committee urged the agencies to improve their ability to detect consumer trends in purchasing genetically modified foods, and to enable the traceability of these foods. Also, better epidemiological and survey tools should be developed that can detect changes in the population’s health that may be caused by these foods.

The committee was also asked to examine safety issues related to foods from cloned animals. Safety evaluation of foods from these animals should also focus on the product itself rather than the process used to create it, said the committee, which recommended that the evaluations compare foods from cloned animals with those from noncloned animals. At present, there is no evidence that foods from cloned animals pose an increased risk to consumers. However, cloned animals that are engineered

to produce pharmaceuticals should be kept from entering the food chain, the committee stated.

The report was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine are private, nonprofit institutions that provide science and health policy advice under a congressional charter. The Research Council is the principal operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. A committee roster follows.

Copies of *Safety of Genetically Engineered Foods: Approaches to Assessing Unintended Health Effects* are available from the National Academies Press:
<http://www.nap.edu>.